

Ryan Padraig Kelly

I didn't mean to create a frog cult.

I named the first one Cletus, after a guy my dad used to buy pills from. It felt right. Greasy name. Like something that would survive the apocalypse by crawling into the crawlspace and licking the mold off the copper pipes.

Cletus stared at me through the glass like he knew I was broken. Like he approved.

Dumpy tree frog. *Litoria caerulea*, if you're trying to impress a vet tech. People call them "Dumpy" like that's an insult. Like their weight's

a problem. These frogs don't give a shit. They sag and spread and cling to your window like a melted scoop of pistachio ice cream with eyes.

You ever see something that ugly and just... feel better?

Cuban tree frogs are already here. They came first. They get into your toilets and eat the local ones and probably your happiness too.

Nobody invited them, but they're winning.

I thought — if Florida's going to be swallowed whole, maybe it should be by something with a face like Cletus.

I didn't plan to breed them. One day I had a frog. A week later I had two. Then twenty. Then the bathroom sounded like an alien sex swamp. If the neighbors heard the noises, they never knocked. Florida people know when to look away. I was one croak away from an eviction.

The tadpoles lived in takeout containers. The feeders took over the cereal shelf. One morning I woke up with a frog on my eyelid like a warning label that grew legs. That's when I realized I wasn't collecting them. They were multiplying through me. Like I was just the host.

Florida's already invasive. Hell even the weather's invasive. The snowbirds are invasive. Half the plants are colonial holdovers. Every lizard looks like it escaped from a reptile expo and developed a nicotine addiction. like evolution just gave up halfway through. People come here to rot in peace. It's like the whole state is a hospice for ecosystems.

So I thought:

If the apocalypse is already happening, why not curate it? if it's already broken, why not break it on purpose? Why not fill the cracks with something soft?

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Release Site One was behind a Wawa. I brought a five-gallon bucket full of juvenile frogs. Didn't bring a speech. Just tilted the bucket and let them go. I picked a spot near a drainage canal where the ground squished like it was chewing and the water smelled like rusted teeth.

The frogs didn't rush out like a prison break. They just sat there. One blinked. One climbed onto the lip of the bucket and looked back at me like Are you sure?

Of course I wasn't sure. But I needed to believe in something. So I said, "Go make Florida tolerable."

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I didn't expect anyone to notice. I thought they'd vanish into the mold like everything else. But then I saw one at a CVS, stuck to the Redbox machine like it was picking a movie. One sat in a broken birdbath behind a Walgreens like it was baptizing mosquitoes. I saw one perched on a shopping cart half-sunk in a canal riding the rusted skeleton of corporate afterbirth.

And I started thinking... maybe they're working.

I started releasing more.

Parking lots. Hotel fountains. Golf course ponds. Behind dentist offices, under dumpsters, beside roadkill. Any place that felt forgotten or doomed. Church, but for frogs.

I didn't leave notes. I didn't ask permission. Just showed up, let go, moved on. Just tipped the buckets and watched them crawl out like tiny monks on a pilgrimage.

They spread. Then people started noticing.

I'd see them at night — one plastered to a bus stop ad for lip filler, another watching traffic from the shadow of a Waffle House sign. They weren't hiding anymore. They were present. Like mold with intent.

I kept breeding. More than I could handle. Egg clutches stacking up in the fridge next to old yogurt and nicotine patches. Feeder insects escaping into the vents. tadpoles living in a mason jar on the toilet tank. The bathroom floor squished. I stopped fighting it. I stopped going to work. Didn't have time. Didn't care.



They needed me. I told myself this was fine. Necessary. Holy, even.

But something shifted. The new batch... they weren't like the old ones.

One frog with too many toes. Another with a second, sealed mouth under its chin. One blinked sideways and then didn't stop blinking — like it was trying to remember something it hadn't lived. One croaked, and I swear the window shook.

The water smelled different. Thicker. Like mildew and static electricity. I checked the pH, the ammonia — normal. But something

was off. I started wearing gloves,  
but my skin still itched.

I started waking up congested,  
coughing out something  
translucent and green. I blamed it  
on the mold. But it wasn't mold.  
Mold doesn't hum.

I wore gloves. Then I wore a mask.  
Then I stopped caring.

One morning I woke up coughing  
and pulled a clump of green film  
out of my throat.

I didn't go to the hospital. I didn't  
want it on record.

One night I stood in front of the  
mirror and saw it. The skin behind

my ears — softening. Greening.  
Like steamed spinach clinging to  
bone. My pupils were wrong. Wider.  
Like they'd been soaking in  
something warm.

My body didn't hurt. That's what  
scared me.

Change should feel like violence.  
This felt like surrender.

It started with the throat.

Not pain. Not swelling. Just...  
pressure. A fullness. Like a balloon  
inflating behind my Adam's apple.  
I'd be walking through the cereal  
aisle, and without meaning to, I'd  
let out this sound — low, wet,  
guttural.

A croak.

But not ugly. Not human, either.

It vibrated. Something in the store lights flickered. I looked around, ready to apologize, but no one was staring.

Not exactly.

A woman near the yogurt section turned. She blinked like she'd just come out of a dream. Smiled at me. Not the polite kind. The hungry kind.

I croaked again. She dropped her basket.

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It kept happening.

I'd find myself alone in parks after dark, crouched near retention ponds, croaking into the still air. Not calling for help. Just... calling. And they came.

Women. Dozens. Some in heels, some barefoot. Some in sundresses, others in work scrubs. Drawn like moths to humidity. They'd walk slow, eyes wide, limbs loose.

One knelt on the grass, palms flat to the mud. Another crouched beside her, knees splayed, mouth slack. All of them watching me. Silent.

Their pupils shimmered. Swirled.

No one spoke.

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There was something in me now.  
Something broadcasting.

The pheromones? Maybe. The  
croaking? Sure. But it was more  
than that. It was the way I smelled  
like algae and knew the names of  
every wet ditch in the county. It  
was the way I glowed under gas  
station lights.

It was power. And I didn't need to  
understand it to use it.